

Illinois

Department of Natural Resources

M-38

<http://dnr.state.il.us>

524 South Second Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701-1787

George H. Ryan, Governor • Brent Manning, Director

August 31, 2001

Marta Witt, Public Affairs Officer
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
30071 S, State Route 53
Wilmington, IL 60481

Dear Marta:

As a partner in the effort to achieve the goals established by the Illinois Land Conservation Act, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR) believes the planning process followed by the US Forest Service (USFS) has provided us with a unique opportunity to protect and create high quality natural resources while also increasing recreational opportunities in northeastern Illinois.

On 21 May 2001, Frank Koenig and Renee Thakali presented the draft Environmental Impact Study and the proposed Land & Resource Management Plan to DNR's Deputy Director, Office Directors and Illinois Nature Preserves Commission staff. They are to be commended for providing members of our Executive staff and field staff with an opportunity to ask questions and to express concerns over the many aspects of the planning process.

DNR supports the USFS recommendations to pursue Alternative 4 due to the balanced approach offered in this option. Although staff had no outstanding issues regarding the draft Prairie Plan itself, there was great interest in the future planning stages dealing with recreational opportunity. DNR is particularly interested in participating in the decision making process leading to specific development and placement of compatible recreational opportunities. When the Midewin planning team begins this process, I would like to assign additional staff from our Forestry and Wildlife Divisions to provide DNR input.

I look forward to continuing our work with the US Forest Service during the next critical stages of planning and implementation.

Sincerely,

Maggie Cole
Regional Resource Manager
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
32W581 Tower Road
West Chicago, IL 60185
630/584-4683

cc: Kirby Cottrell Frank Koenig
 Bill Glass Dan Brouillard
 Tom Gargrave Jim Langbein

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JADA

"Adding to Will County's Growth and Prosperity"

Deer Run Industrial Park
Island City Industrial Park



JOLIET ARSENAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

500 S. Water Street
Wilmington, IL 60481
(815) 476-5100 Phone / (815) 476-5120 Fax
info @ jada . org / www . jada . org

George H. Ryan, Governor
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Joseph Ward, *Vice-Chairman*
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Jerry Gatties, *Director*
Wayne McMillan, *Director*
Mayor Arthur Schultz, *Director*
William Weidling, *Director*
Richard Kwasneski, *Executive Director*

M-43

September 4, 2001

Frank Koenig, Prairie Supervisor
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
30071 S. State Route 53
Wilmington, IL 60481

Dear Mr. Koenig:

I am submitting comments prior to your September 6, 2001 deadline on your Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan for the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie on behalf of the Joliet Arsenal Development Authority.

1. **Page 2-7 Objective #3 regarding long term scenic integrity of the State Route 53 Viewshed.** Our concerns are that the recent acquisition of property along Rt. 53 south of the administration-building site by Corlands to benefit the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie not continues to other properties. Your comments in a recent newspaper article reflect that you don't want to see any buildings from your administration center concern JADA because of our close proximity and our need to construct buildings in the Island City Industrial Park.
2. **Page 4-14 Acquisition and Conveyance of Lands.** Does the U.S. Forest Service have a priority list of parcels that they or other parties are interested in acquiring on their behalf?
3. **Page E-5 Objective 8b** Define what you mean by land uses being edge restricted? Our concern is that we have a right to develop our property based upon the Illinois Land Conservation Act of 1995 USCAs 1609 (PL104-106, 1996 S 1124 Sec. 2897 (c)), if there is a need for buffering or restricting of uses we would expect the U.S. Forest service to limit their uses on the property adjacent to the Island City Industrial Park to prevent any negative affects.
4. **Figure 5 Scenery Management System Map.** The area surrounding the Arsenal including the area along Rt. 53 south of the Administration Building and the property along South Arsenal Road. Are these areas being considered for acquisition by the U.S. Forest Service or any entity to donate to the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie? Obviously these properties are important considering the recent acquisition of the Russell Farm by Corlands to benefit the Midewin

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National Tallgrass Prairie. From a scenic integrity standpoint why have they not been included in your plan?

5. General concern is that if the U.S. Forest Service has or is considering acquisition or working with another entity to acquire property surrounding the Arsenal then why are those parcels not identified in your plan? JADA and the surrounding communities are opposed to any further acquisition of land in the area, for or by the U.S. Forest Service or any other entity that would take properties off the tax rolls.

The Joliet Arsenal Development Authority will work with the U.S. Forest Service as they continue to plan for the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. We believe that by every entity respecting each other to develop the property at the Arsenal in its intent by the Illinois Land Conservation Act of 1995 USCAs 1609 (PL104-106, 1996 S 1124 Sec. 2897 (c)), allows for all the parties to achieve their goals as intended.

Sincerely,



Richard Kwasheski

Cc: JADA Board
Senator Larry Walsh
Representative Mary K. O'Brien
Mayor McGann
Dr. Russ White

**WILL COUNTY LAND USE DEPARTMENT**

58 East Clinton Street • Suite 500 • Joliet, Illinois 60432

M-46

Ms. Marta Witt, Public Affairs Officer (By facsimile 815-423-6376)
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
30071 S. State Route 53
Wilmington, Illinois 60481

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed
Prairie Plan for the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

The Waste Services Division of Will County has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Prairie Plan for the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and offers the following comments on the documents:

Chapter 3 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, entitled, "Affected Environment And Environmental Consequences," "Scenery", page 232 contains an inaccurate and misleading commentary on the County Landfill. This passage states, "A proposal for the landfill includes a mounded system that may reach 150 feet above adjacent lands. It is expected that the upper portion of the site, as the mound develops, will always be unvegetated and heavy equipment (scrapers, end loaders, etc.) will be visible during working hours. The landfill will be visible from many parts of the prairie."

The proposed County landfill was designed not as a "mound" but as a landform with undulating topography to blend with the surrounding prairie. The landfill will be vegetated, with native grasses and forbs chosen in conjunction with the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie staff. In contrast to the widely publicized idea that the landfill is to be located adjacent to the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, the landfill is actually over 2 miles from the cemetery and may not be significantly visible from all portions of Midewin. The height of the landfill is approximately even with that of the water tower located nearest South Arsenal Road. This water tower is not visible from all locations within Midewin.

While heavy equipment will be utilized at the landfill, the landfill is a temporary operation which will have an end-use designed to complement the recreational/aesthetic values of the Prairie. Such end-use will rely heavily on the input of the Will County Forest Preserve District and Midewin staff.

In contrast, the industrial park on the west side of Route 53 will be a more permanent visage on the Prairie. Such permanent industrial presence, which may not be as lightly-industrial as assumed in this section, should be more thoroughly investigated in terms of scenery conflict, noise, and odor.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donna Shehane".

Donna Shehane

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BUILDING
(815) 727-8634
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ENGINEERING
(815) 740-8140
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IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
Custom House, Room 244
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106-2904

M-50

August 30, 2001

ER-01/374

Ms. Marta Witt, Public Affairs Officer
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
30071 South State Route 53
Wilmington, Illinois 60481

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Dear Ms. Witt:

As requested, the Department of the Interior (Department) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan for the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, Will County, Illinois. The Department offers the following comments and recommendations for your consideration.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The DEIS for the plan thoroughly and objectively analyzes six basic alternative approaches to the restoration and management of Midewin and the potential impacts associated with each alternative. Alternative 1 is the "no action" alternative, which would mean little change for Midewin. Alternatives 2 through 6 contain various amounts of restoration and development of recreational facilities such as trails. All action alternatives would result in increased acreages of native vegetation, as well as increased biodiversity.

Alternative 4, the Forest Service's preferred alternative, consists of a good balance between restoration and recreation. We believe it is the best alternative biologically because it provides a sound mix of future habitat types, including sufficient grassland (about 6,720 acres) to support declining grassland bird species such as loggerhead shrike, upland sandpiper, and bobolink. It also provides for the restoration of about 4,230 acres of upland (mesic/dry) prairie and about 4,980 acres of wetland types including wet prairie, sedge meadow, and marsh. Although the grassland habitat is composed of European pasture grasses, the plan calls for monitoring the use of both grassland and restored prairie habitat by grassland birds, so that if these species are using native prairie, additional native prairie could be restored. The other alternatives seem to emphasize one type of habitat or recreation or restoration to the detriment of other needs. The Department strongly supports the Forest Service's preferred alternative.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Contaminant Issues

The Forest Service continues to be under a moratorium for ground breaking at Midewin, pending the resolution of environmental contaminant issues. We recommend that the Forest Service use the recommended preliminary remediation goals presented in the report completed by the Ecological Work group as screening numbers. Any area that meets these numbers should be released from the moratorium because the likelihood that contamination would harm wildlife is slim. We understand that the Forest Service has taken samples of sediments and soils from it's property, and that this comparison could be performed.

Even though much of the land could be released from the ground-breaking moratorium, we recommend some continued caution with respect to the contaminant issue at Midewin. Existing streams and wetlands should be evaluated for pollutants from historic Joliet Army Ammunition Plant activities. Soils of railroad grades should be sampled prior to re-grading to determine whether hazardous levels of creosote and/or pesticides are present. The Forest Service should undertake efforts to prevent landfill and industrial area runoff from adversely affecting restored areas at Midewin.

Literature Citations

Comparisons of the reference citations in the text of the DEIS with entries in Literature Cited (Chapter 6) indicate that a number of the referenced materials are not included in the entries in Chapter 6 or have possible discrepancies in either the date of the referenced literature or spelling of the author's name. Please see the cited references below for examples. A date or name followed by a question mark indicates an area of a possible discrepancy between the citation in the text and an entry in Chapter 6.

Page 3-25: Leopold, Wolman, and Miller (1964) [1995?]
Page 3-25: Maidment (1993)
Page 3-27: Dimissie and Kahn (1993) [Demissie?]
Page 3-55: Illinois Natural Heritage Database 2001 [2000?]
Page 3-69: Bowles and McBride 1996
Page 3-73: Transeau 1935
Page 3-76: Plumb and Dodd 1983 [1993?]
Page 3-76: Guthrie 1984

We recommend that a thorough verification review of the entire DEIS be performed before preparation of the Final EIS to eliminate the identified deficiencies and discrepancies, as well as any others that may be found in the DEIS.

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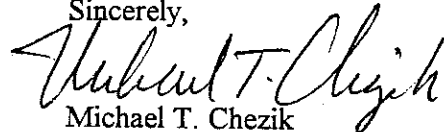
Ms. Marta Witt

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The Department appreciates the Forest Service's efforts to enhance the fish and wildlife resources of northeastern Illinois. We strongly support the preferred alternative and continue to offer our services to assist in implementation.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the documents and provide comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michael T. Chezik".

Michael T. Chezik

Regional Environmental Officer